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ABSTRACT

This document discusses how insights and knowledge gained from the author's stay in India have been applied to developing a course plan for a "World Literature I" course. Following a brief introduction, the document describes using "The Bhagavadgita" and "Hindu Myths," points out some of the general questions which the course addresses in regard to Indian literature, and discusses the use of a slide presentation and sections of an epic film. The document concludes with a number of curriculum materials from the course: questions for mid-term and final exams and for papers, and a secondary reading list. (SR)

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Neil Warrence

The Integration of Indian Literature into a World Literature Course

Introduction:

Since India is such a diverse and complex country, and since my interests in it are correspondingly varied and complex, the new knowledge and insights which I have gained from our time in India during the summer of 1988 have been applied to several courses which I teach and are not restricted to one particular curriculum. The material has been, or will be, utilized in "Introduction to the Humanities", "Psychology and Literature", and "World Literature I" (which deals with literature from ancient times through roughly the time of the European Renaissance) and "World Literature II" (which treats material from the European Renaissance through the contemporary period). Since World Literature I is a course I have just completed teaching and is the first of these courses I have taught since my return from India (I was on sabbatical leave for the academic year 1988-89), I will restrict my comments for this report to that course.

World Literature I:

At Raritan Valley Community College, this course deals with much ancient and archetypal material. The emphasis is on epics and mythology and some of the questions which this type of literature raises. There has been an effort in recent years to make the syllabus of this course primarily non-European (or American) literature. In keeping with this trend toward internationalization of the curriculum, I introduced The Bhagavadgita (former Indian

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President Radhakrishnan's translation) and Hindu Myths (edited by Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty) into the course after my return from India. Some of the general questions which this course addresses are the following: the Hindu sense of time and the significance of cyclical time in Indian life; the meaning of the doctrine of karma and its relation to other philosophical systems with elements of determinism and/or fatalism; the ways in which religious views permeate and penetrate virtually all aspects of literary, cultural, and artistic life in India; the ways in which modern Indian literature develops and incorporates aspects of classical Indian literature. (This latter lecture will serve as one of several bridges to "World Literature II", which will include readings from modern Indian writers such as Tagore, R.K. Narayan, and V.S. Naipaul.)

I was also able to develop a relevant slide presentation culled from both my own photographs and those of many of my colleagues. This, of course, helped give a sense of immediacy to a distant and exotic land and tied in nicely with two sections of Louis Malle's epic film Phantom India. The two sections I used were "Part Three: The Indians and the Sacred" and "Part Four: Dream and Reality."

I am including a number of documents from this course which consist of both a secondary reading list and questions for exams and papers. All questions and books pertinent to India have been asterisked. I am also including an announcement of a talk I gave at the college, which was part of an international lecture series. The actual title and overarching theme of the talk was "Continuity

and Change in Indian Tradition" (The document here omits the word "change.") The talk enabled me to review and reflect on my overall experience in India, and as such comprised part of the overall application of my work in India to my duties at, and contributions to, my home institution.

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Mid Term Examination

Directions: Answer one question in Part A and one question in Part B. Write well organized, clear essays in each case. Make your answers as specific as possible.

Part I:

*1. Compare the heroes of the two epics we have read, Arjuna and Gilgamesh. Be sure to include both similarities and differences in your answer. Some of the things you might wish to include are: their personalities, the problems which they face, how they cope with these problems, their relationships with others, their growth and transformation.

*2. Compare the two epics, The Bhagavadgita and The Epic of Gilgamesh. Include both similarities and differences in your answer. Some of the things you might wish to include are: the situations (both physical and psychological) with which the epics begin, the overall movement and development of the epics, the major these of the epics, the role of the hero in the epic, the end of the epic.

Part II:

1. Discuss the attitude toward the supernatural events and persons that we find in "THE Luck of the Sea and the Luck of the Mountains." Be sure to discuss the attitude of both Fire-fade (the younger brother who loses his brother's fishhook) and the Princess (daughter of the God of the Sea) who he marries.

2. Explain some of the characteristics of the so-called "cult of beauty" centered in Kyoto around the year 100 A.D. Pay particular attention to esthetics and moral values and codes of conduct between people. Also, pay attention to the interrelationships between these three areas of life (i.e. esthetics, morals and interpersonal relationships). Then discuss some of these values specifically as they appear in either The Pillow book of Sei Shonagon or the section from The Tale of Genji.

*3. Explain the three modes (or tamas) in The Bhagavadgita. Explain how these can be binding and contrary to the goal of desireless action. Then indicate which of the three Arjuna's personality is most easily drawn to and discuss how this particular attachment is a problem for him through out the epic.

4. Discuss the character of Enkidu in The Epic of Gilgamesh and the role he plays in the epic. Then show the importance of Enkidu's interactions and relationship to Gilgamesh in terms of Gilgamesh's journey to increased consciousness. Be sure to say something of Enkidu's role as a "double" figure to Gilgamesh (i.e. another, and particularly important, aspect of Gilgamesh's psyche.)

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Questions for First Paper: Due Oct.

Directions: Answer any one of the following questions. Write as thorough and thoughtful essay as you can. Be sure to write clearly and use appropriate supporting material to make your essay as cogent and powerful as possible. Your response should be about 3-4 typed, double-spaced pages.

*1. In his commentary on the Bhagavadgita Radhakrishnan explains that "Arjuna has still to listen to the voice of the teacher who declares that he should lead a life in which his acts will not have their root in desire, that there is such a thing as niskama karma--desireless action." Explain what is meant be desireless action, then show how an understanding of this concept can help Arjuna solve the problems which face him. Utilize those aspects of Hindu philosophy that are relevant to answering this question.

2. "When Gilgamesh had put on the crown, glorious Ishtar lifted her eyes, seeing the beauty of Gilgamesh. She said 'Come to me Gilgamesh, and by my bridegroom; grant me seed of your body, let me be your bride and you shall be my husband." Though the temptation of the goddess is great, Gilgamesh rejects her. Explain the significance of this rejection as a crucial step on Gilgamesh's journey to consciousness.

3. Discuss any two dreams which either Gilgamesh or Enkidu has in The Epic of Gilgamesh. Give your understanding of each dream in some detail and then indicate how dreams work (what function do they play?) in the entire epic.

*4. In Ch. II, verse 59 of the Bhagavadgita we find "The objects of sense turn away from the embodied soul who abstains from feeding on them but the taste for them remains. Even the taste burns away when the Supreme is seen." Explain what is meant by this and show how it is relevant to Arjuna's dilemma and the lessons which Krishna is teaching him. As with question #1, call upon any elements of Hindu philosophy which are helpful in answering this question.

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Final Examination

Directions:

Answer two questions from Part I and one question from Part II. Each question counts 33 and 1/3 points. The extra credit question counts ten points. Write well organized, clear essays in each case.

Part I:

1. Following is a haiku poem of Matsuo Basho found in "The Narrow Road of OKU."

The summer grasses --
Of brave soldiers' dreams
The aftermath.

Discuss some of the major characteristics of Haiku poetry in general. Then give as detailed an analysis as you can of the Basho poem. Be sure to deal with both thematic material and poetic technique.

2. Discuss the significance of the episode in book 24 of The Iliad when Priam meets Achilleus and the two men weep and share their mutual grief. Explain the transformation which Achilleus has undergone and discuss how (or how not) this transformation is adequate compensation for the tragedies which he has experienced.

3. Discuss some of the major elements of the No theatre. Then discuss one particular No play we have read. Be sure to discuss both tematic and technical and structural aspects of the play and in particular show how the characteristic aspects of No drama help communicate the overall ideas and feelings of the play.

Part II:

*1. In both the Bhagavadgita and The Iliad we come across elements of deterministic thinking - the Hindu notion of karma and the Greek concept of fate. Compare these two notions and in particular indicate which you think is more deterministic, i.e. which allows less room for the notion of free will in human affairs. Be sure to give ample explanation for your point of view.

2. We have frequently found water to be important in the material we have read this semester. First discuss some of the possible meanings and significance of this symbol in general. Then discuss how the symbol of water is used specifically in any two works we have read.

Part III: Extra credit:

1. At the end of Oedipus Rex, Oedipus plucks out his eyes. The chorus says to him "I cannot say you made the right decision. You would have been better dead than blind." Do you agree with Oedipus' decision or with the chorus. Give your reasons for your point of view.

Secondary Reading List Neil Warrence

I. Far East and India:

1. The Rise and Splendour of the Chinese Empire, Rene Grousset
2. Musings of a Chinese Mystic (Selections from Chuang Tzu) introd. by Lionel Giles
3. The Dhamapada, trans. Narada Thera
4. The Sayings of Confucius R. Ware, trans.
5. The Pillow-Book of Sei Shonagon, Arthur Waley, trans.
6. Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China, Arthur Waley
7. The Secret of the Golden Flower, Richard Whilhelm, trans.
8. The I Ching, Richard Wilhelm, trans.
9. Eight Lectures on the I Ching, Helmuth Wilhelm
10. Zen Buddhism, D.T. Suzuki
11. Zen and Japanese Culture, D.T. Suzuki
13. Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, Shunryu Suzuki
14. Buddhism: Its Essence and Development, Edward Conze
15. Buddhist Texts Through the Ages, Edward Conze, ed.
16. Meditation in Action, Chogyam Trungpa
*17. The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology, Joseph Campbell
18. Tu Fu, China's Greatest Poet, William Hung, ed.
*19. The Mahabharata, Chakravartai Narasimhat, trans.
*20. The Upanishads, Max Muller, trans.
*21. Ten Principal Upanishads, Shree Prohit Swami and W.B. Yeats
*22. How to Know God, the Yogan Aphorisms of Patanjali
*23. Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna
*24. Ramakrishna, His Life and Sayings, Max Muller
*25. Raja Yoga, Swami Vivekananda
*26. Hinduism, K.M. Sen
*27. Philosophies of India, Heinrich Zimmer
*28. Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, Heinrich Zimmer
*29. The Prince of Ayedha, D.S. Sarma, trans.

II. Middle East and Greece, Emphasizing Mythology:

1. The Great Mother, Erich Neumann
2. History and Origins of Consciousness, Erich Neumann.
3. The Sacred and the Profane, Mircea Eliade
4. The Myth of the Eternal Return, Mircea Eliada
5. The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Joseph Campbell
6. Thespis, Theodor Gaster
7. The New Golden Bough, Sir James Frazer
8. The Origin of Attic Comedy, Francis Cornford
9. The Greeks, H.D.F. Kitte
10. The Basic Writings of C.G. Jung, Violet de Laszle, ed.
11. Dreams, C.G. Jung
12. Interpretation of Fairy Tales, M.L. von Franz
13. The Feminine in Fairy Tales, M.L. von Franz
14. The Uses of Enchantment, Bruno Betthelheim